

Taylor-Fraser House
originally at 109 S. Pitt Street
now at 414 Franklin Street
Alexandria
Virginia

HABS No. VA-678

HABS
VA
7-ALEX,
162-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

TAYLOR-FRASER HOUSE

HABS
VA
7-ALEX,
162-

Location: Originally at 109 S. Pitt Street, Alexandria, Virginia (moved October 7, 1975 to 414 Franklin Street, Alexandria, Virginia, southeast corner of the intersection with Pitt Street).

Present Owner: Harry W. Harris

Present Use: Rental property

Statement of Significance: This late eighteenth century residence exhibiting fine detailing may have been built by an Alexandria mayor. It recently gained much notice for its dramatic removal (because of its location on an urban renewal site) from its original site to a site six blocks south on Franklin Street where it awaits restoration.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Unclear, but probably between 1780 and 1799 by either Jesse Taylor or William Fraser (see Original and subsequent owners below).
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The first owner was probably Jesse Taylor and the second, William Fraser.

On October 19, 1780, the Escheator for the State of Virginia conveyed to Jesse Taylor the quarter block which includes the southwest corner of King and Pitt Streets. On May 20, 1799, Jesse Taylor and his wife Elizabeth conveyed that part of this lot, or quarter block, on which the building known as 109 South Pitt street stands, to William Fraser for £ 400 current money of Virginia:

Begin on the west side of Pitt Street 111 feet 7 inches south of King Street (that is, on the southern line of the Lanmon Opera House property);
South of Pitt Street 40 feet;
West parallel to King Street 61 feet 8 ½ inches;
North parallel to Pitt Street 40 feet;
Then in a straight line to the beginning.

The price of the property, £ 400 current money of Virginia, indicates that it was improved when Taylor sold it in 1799. The house was built either by Taylor, or by William Fraser. Fraser, in his will dated November 9, 1825, and recorded May 25, 1826, leaves to his three daughters "the Brick Tenement and square of ground I now own in the Town of Alexandria on the west side of Pitt Street between King and Prince Streets."

On April 1, 1836, the Fraser heirs sold the house to John L. Pascoe for \$900. On February 23, 1850, John Pascoe and his wife conveyed the house and its contents to Charles Pascoe, apparently in trust for the benefit of John's wife and children. On June 19, 1884, after Charles Pascoe's death, the house is conveyed to Louis Brill, Jr. and Moses Waterman for \$1,500. Brill was the proprietor of the Opera House Restaurant (see HABS report on Lannon's Opera House, VA-675). There are numerous deeds of trust, including trusts on the furniture and equipment in the restaurant, until finally, on April 16, 1898, Louis Brill, Jr. and his wife conveyed the house and lot at 109 South Pitt Street to the Robert Portner Brewing Company. Evidently Alexandria citizens did not enthusiastically support Brill's "Palace Saloon."

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Jesse Taylor, a native of Belfast, Ireland, emigrated to America in 1779. He served as Mayor of Alexandria from February 1788 to February 1789, and again from February 1792 to February 1793. His daughter, Jane Allen Taylor, married Dennis Ramsay, son of William Ramsay who was one of the progenitors and first Trustees of the town of Alexandria.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: An early twentieth century view that appears in the Alexandria Gazette, October 8, 1975.
2. Bibliography:
 - a. Primary and unpublished sources: Alexandria Deed Books L (Hustings Court), p. 430; M (Hustings Court), p. 87; W-2, p. 174 and p. 254; L-3, p. 189; 14, p. 408; 16, p. 128; 18, p. 258 and 310; 23, p. 348 and p. 350, and 41, p. 202. Alexandria Will Book 3, Orphans' Court, p. 233.

For information on the move to 414 Franklin Street, see: Washington Post, October 8, 1975; Washington Star-News, October 8, 1975; and the Alexandria Gazette, October 8, 1975.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Brockett, F. L. The Lodge of Washington, 1783-1876
(Alexandria: G. H. Ramey & Son, 1876).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The four-bayed, two-storied building has a remarkably fine Federal door and notable dormer windows.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Two-and-a-half stories, four bays.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, Flemish on the street facade, common on the sides and back.
3. Chimneys: Two interior end chimneys.
4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance in the left bay has a wooden open-bed pediment rising from Doric pilasters and framing a six-paneled door crowned by an arched fanlight. The jambs are paneled and the segmental arch above the fanlight keyed.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All windows have six-over-six light double-hung sash. Second floor windows have surviving louvered shutters.
5. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Sawtooth brick cornice.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Two dormer windows jut out from the roof and repeat the open bed pediment of the entrance. The windows are arched and have tracery.

C. Description of Interior:

From the two interior photographs, one can see the stair hall and a close-up of the stairway itself. An eight-paneled door with paneled jambs and simple moulded framing leads from the stairhall to another room. A turned newel post announces the stairway. A circular handrail is supported by round tapering balusters. Delicate scrolls mark step ends.

D. Site:

Prior to its move, the building faced eastward along Pitt Street; it now faces north on the south side of Franklin Street.

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh B. Cox of
The Historic Alexandria
Foundation
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Edited by
Antoinette J. Lee
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in 1968 to document the commercial and residential buildings in downtown Alexandria which were to be demolished in an urban renewal project. The project was cosponsored by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Mrs. Hugh B. Cox was the historian and George Eisenman supplied the photographs. In 1975 the material was edited and updated by Antoinette J. Lee, working on contract with HABS.